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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.
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HOME EDUCATION BY MEANS OF READING COURSES
AND THE COOPERATION OF STATE AND NATIONAL
AGENCIES.

By ELLEN C. LOMBARD,
Director of Home Education.

*Report of the Conference of Special Collaborators and Librarians
Called by the United States Commissioner of Education and
Held at Lexington, Ky., April 22, 1922.*

Representatives from 24 States and the District of Columbia were present, as follows: Arkansas, 1; Colorado, 1; District of Columbia, 4; Illinois, 2; Indiana, 5; Kansas, 1; Kentucky, 11; Louisiana, 2; Massachusetts, 2; Michigan, 1; Mississippi, 1; New York, 1; North Carolina, 2; North Dakota, 1; Ohio, 2; Oklahoma, 1; Pennsylvania, 2; South Carolina, 1; Texas, 1; Utah, 2; Virginia, 1; Wisconsin, 2; total, 49.

PROGRAM.

General chairman: ELLEN C. LOMBARD, United States Bureau of Education.

General topic: Problems of cooperation between State and national agencies in connection with the home reading courses.

- (1) Conference opened by the United States Commissioner of Education, John J. Tigert.
- (2) Problems of cooperation. Practical suggestions for improvement and extension. Local problems.

Topic chairman: O. E. Klingaman, director of extension, University of Iowa.

Discussion: Wellington Patrick, director of extension, University of Kentucky.

- (3) Suitability of materials. Suggestions for new material, sources, etc.

Topic chairman: Charles G. Maphis, director of extension, University of Virginia.

Discussion: Elmore Peterson, director of extension, University of Colorado.

General topic: Problems of cooperation between State and national agencies in connection with the home reading courses—Continued.

(4) Library cooperation and its success. Reciprocal relations.

Topic chairman: Carl H. Milam, secretary, American Library Association, Chicago.

Discussion: Mary B. Palmer, secretary, North Carolina Library Commission. C. B. Roden, librarian, Chicago Public Library.

(5) Value of the service. Accomplishments. How the service can be made more valuable.

Topic chairman: Walton S. Bittner, associate director, extension division, Indiana University.

The conference was opened by the Commissioner of Education with a statement of the reasons for calling special collaborators and librarians together to discuss the home reading project and the plan of cooperation existing between the several States and the Federal Bureau of Education. Attention was directed to the difficulties and limitations to be overcome, and the desirability for frank expression of opinions as to the means of surmounting these obstacles and making the work more effective.

COOPERATION IN IOWA.

By O. E. KLINGAMAN.

If one wishes to spend his leisure half hours in a way leading to true pleasure as well as to true profit, he can do nothing better than read good books. The average American satisfies himself with what the current magazines and newspapers afford, letting the better literature of the world lie on the shelves of libraries or in bookshops, unknown and unread save by the few who have found that books contain the great principles of life.

Consistent, orderly reading of the world's classics is within the reach of everyone—the business man at his desk, the mother in her home, the youth and the maid, the boy and the girl; all have time, if they will use it, to read some definite group of books that will fit them more fully for the part they are to play in the drama of life.

Ideas such as these are familiar. Most people like to read, and they are glad to read good books, but they find it difficult to hold themselves down to steady, orderly effort. Encouragement has come from many sources in the past, and now a great governmental institution has seen the importance of good reading and has begun to outline regular courses in various fields. The Bureau of Education of the Department of the Interior is the institution which has this work in hand. So vast is its territory that the department has re-

quested the assistance of other competent organizations in the various States. In the State of Iowa such cooperation is offered by the extension division of the University of Iowa.

Some of the courses will appeal to boys and girls and some to adults of varying tastes. The courses are well balanced and cover almost every field of activity. After the reading of each course is completed as prescribed, a certificate will be awarded bearing the seal of the United States Bureau of Education and signed by the Commissioner of Education. All men and women, young and old, who want to know the best there is in the literature of the world and to gain the inspiration it gives, are invited to join this national reading circle.

Home education was organized for Iowa in July, 1920. The first publicity was in the form of a S. U. I. Service Bulletin, issued by the extension division. It was sent to returned soldiers, high-school and rural teachers, parent-teachers' associations, etc., and met with a generous response from various people all over Iowa.

The next publicity was of the same bulletin form, published in August, 1921. This went to various organized associations in different communities, county agents, ministerial associations, libraries, county superintendents, and principals of all schools, besides our active mailing list. We now have 200 active readers, ranging from 16 to 70 years of age. Our list includes high-school students, doctors, lawyers, clubwomen, farmers and their wives, politicians, business men, mechanics, and tradesmen of various sorts, studying the books leading to a greater grasp of their individual subject, need, or advancement. High-school and college students supplement their studies in history and literature by many of the various courses.

A group of young girls in the Amana Colonies are reading several different courses—striving to know more of the world and its history and literature than is possible to get in the graded schools they are allowed to attend.

Another reader, a woman totally blind, has completed Courses I, II, and IX; she reads all her books by the Braille system and then types her own reports.

We have groups of clubwomen reading and reviewing different books at their meetings. Mothers who have children in our university and in various colleges are striving by this means to keep pace with their sons and daughters.

We have many requests from readers concerning our Americanization or citizenship courses. If courses could be outlined containing books on naturalization, elections, and the ballot; laws concerning women and children; political parties and platforms; county and municipal governments; tax levies, etc., it would meet this demand.

DISCUSSION. Mr. Wellington Patrick discussed the difficulties encountered in carrying on the work in Kentucky because of inadequate library facilities throughout the State. He recommended that the Commissioner of Education call a general conference next fall, in cooperation with institutions and organizations in Kentucky, to enable educational and social forces to discuss and formulate a definite movement to overcome these limitations.

SUITABILITY OF MATERIAL WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW MATERIALS.

By CHARLES G. MAPHIS.

It was not long after the extension division of the University of Virginia had agreed to act as administrative agent for the reading courses in Virginia that the fact was realized that the greatest obstacle in the way of the wider use of the courses was the inability of prospective readers to secure books on account of the lack of library facilities in the State and the expense of purchasing the necessary books.

We, therefore, addressed our first attention largely to an effort to secure these facilities. A new service was created in the State library in Richmond, which agreed to purchase all the books required by the various reading courses and to lend them free of charge to those who enrolled. To supplement this work a small appropriation was made by the University extension division itself for the purchase of books to lend in a similar way. Thus two new agencies of service were created by the reading course in this State.

My topic for discussion is "Suitability of Materials, with Suggestions for New Materials." The aim of the course will determine largely its extent. If it is intended primarily for those who have already acquired some taste for reading and cultivated to some extent the habit of reading, the present course may be adequate, because I have found that it appeals very largely to that class of persons. In the 21 courses now offered 382 books are required. While it is true that the world of books is too large for any one person to master, there is some doubt in my own mind whether the courses as now outlined make a sufficiently wide appeal to interest persons who have not already acquired the habit of reading or to attract persons who are in need of courses of reading in their special fields.

I therefore suggest the following additional material:

(1) A new course of fiction made up largely of last year's "best sellers." I think all librarians would testify to the fact that there is greater demand for fiction than for any other class of literature. Through this course as a beginning, interest might be established in other lines of reading.

(2) A course of the best war books.

(3) A course of books on citizenship and government. This, in my opinion, is a very important course and would appeal largely to new women voters.

(4) A course of books on labor and capital.

(5) A course of business books for business men.

(6) A course on rural sociology and economic problems.

(7) A course consisting of the best children's books.

In my opinion, if the reading courses were made shorter and a smaller number of books required for their completion, a much larger proportion of those who enroll would complete the courses and many others would be induced to undertake them. It would have the additional advantage of allowing a diversity of reading. Most persons do not care to confine their reading to one subject or one division of literature for so long a time as to complete the reading of from 20 to 30 books. Therefore, in my opinion, it would be wise to establish more courses with fewer required books in each and thus appeal to a larger number of groups with diversified interests and encourage the completion of the courses.

A reader who has completed from 5 to 10 books in one subject is likely to have created an interest which would lead him voluntarily to further exploration in that field without the requirements of the course.

DISCUSSION. Mr. Elmore Peterson pointed out that suitability of materials was not so important as availability in his work in Colorado. He asked what was to be done when there were no libraries and no book stores. He stated that in Colorado books would be purchased and made available to all who called for them.

LIBRARY COOPERATION.

By CARL H. MILAM.

With the possible exception of newspapers and magazines no agency or institution can do so much for the promotion of voluntary self-education as the American public library. It is the one tax-supported educational agency whose business is to serve the educational needs of every citizen throughout all the years of his life.

Whatever may have been true in the years that have passed, it is certainly not true now that the public library is primarily a place for the circulation of popular novels—a sort of ladies' and children's "pink tea" affair. The library which is pointing the way in these days is the one which is emphasizing its educational functions; the one which is in reality becoming a headquarters and fountain source for all the ambitious men, women, and children who want to

read and study seriously to a definite end. It is a university, a college, high school, elementary school, correspondence school, and night school—all in one—without formal classes.

All libraries are doing this educational work to a greater extent than the public realizes! Progressive libraries are looking forward to the day when adequate funds will be provided that will make possible a more generous provision of the books which promote serious thinking; and the employment of a staff of trained specialists in the use of books to promote reading and study and to give detailed advice to those who want to undertake courses of reading.

DISCUSSION.—Mr. Henderson, of the University of Michigan, called attention to the pathetic condition of boys and girls who spend 5 or 6 years of their lives learning to read and are then unable to make use of their accomplishment for lack of library facilities.

LIBRARY FACILITIES IN NORTH CAROLINA.

By MARY B. PALMER.

The determination of educators and librarians that American people should not only have access to books but should also know how to use them effectively and should have the desire to read has resulted in many plans for book extension. The first difficulty for all of us comes with individuals who have not yet learned the mechanics of reading. This group includes not only those who can not read, but those who deal with print hesitatingly and with effort. And there are those who are not prepared to handle an unfamiliar form of print, such as indexes, manuals, compilations of statistics, etc. They are entirely unable to use books as tools. The third group of special difficulty is made up of the people who receive only as much as the author gives, and contribute nothing themselves to the reading of the book. We need more, "creative readers," as Carl Van Doren defines the reader who "challenges, disputes, denies, fights his way through his book, and emerges to some extent always another person."

To bring books to all the people of North Carolina has been the chief purpose and aim of the North Carolina Library Commission. Of the 2,559,123 "Tar Heels," only 3,299 are foreign born. In the past 10 years the urban population has increased from 14 per cent to 19 per cent. We have 560 textile mills in the State, and the value of our manufactured products is almost a billion dollars. In wealth, production, and influence we are rapidly becoming an industrial State. However, 1,828,000 of our people live outside incorporated places, and our plans must be made chiefly for rural districts.

To supply the reading interests of our people the library commission has sent free traveling and package libraries into every county. In 1921 the appropriation was increased 118 per cent and the use of books has shown a corresponding increase. The package libraries include debate material for rural schools, study club papers, and farmers' libraries, in addition to a great quantity of material on subjects varying from fertilizers to the Einstein theory.

The traveling libraries, containing 40 volumes each, go to rural schools and communities, and frequently afford the first opportunity of contact with books beyond the school textbooks. Letters of keen appreciation of these books come to the office almost daily. They tell the story of what books can mean to persons shut in by bad weather, swollen streams, or simply by distance from their neighbors.

To our rural folk reading courses appeal strongly. This is particularly true of our young people, who are eager to get the best from books. The reading courses of the United States Bureau of Education afford an introduction to the world of print and should be placed in the hands of every American boy and girl.

VALUE OF THE HOME READING SERVICE.

By W. S. BRITNER.

There is no doubt that university extension and the adult education movement in the United States suffer from the lack of national integration. Theoretically it is a fine thing for each State to go its own way, experiment, and develop independently its ventures in adult education and public-welfare service, but practically each State agency limps along in a kind of isolation, lacking the help that might come from a knowledge of how other States are solving identical problems arising from a national undertaking. The 15 or more universities which conduct the United States home reading courses can rely on the Bureau of Education for definite assistance. They can compare the results with some certainty, because the courses are conducted on a uniform basis.

The prestige alone of State cooperation with a Federal bureau is sufficient to justify almost any concrete device or plan of cooperation. No matter how much Americans may seem to dislike Federal bureaucracy, they are impressed favorably when it aids a State agency. An established connection between the United States Bureau of Education, the State department of public instruction, and the State university, such as exists in the case of the home reading courses, is valuable simply because it is a tangible connection. It is a healthy sign; it gives hope of intelligent unity in action, even though it should have been no more than a paper declaration in that direction. A co-operative undertaking tends to strengthen all the agencies working

together if for no other reason than that it implies harmony and an absence of disconnected effort.

The plan of decentralization, of using State collaborators in administration, is a good one for several reasons. It helps to negative the fear of so-called Federal interference; it sets aside the criticism of United States bureaus on the ground of meddling, dictation, or control. If decentralization were adopted as a permanent comprehensive method, it should make possible a great extension of nationally supported projects in education without inviting opposition to alleged overexpansion at Washington. Washington offices used to be, probably still are, flooded with requests for information on all sorts of things, and many of these requests were referred, transferred, and referred again from bureau to bureau. Why not have one reference back to the university in the State from which the inquiry came—for certain kinds of information that are not readily available in the Federal departments? The package library service of the university extension divisions would lend itself to the same kind of plan under which the home reading courses are administered. Correspondence study courses in high school and college could be offered more economically and efficiently by State universities if a central agency like the Bureau of Education would provide a means for cooperation.

It seems to me to follow naturally that any plan which involves Federal and State cooperation should have as many earmarks of connection as possible and convenient. The appointment of collaborators and the use of the frank seem trivial in themselves, but they are, to the public, proof of cooperation. That the public likes to get a "United States official business" communication is less amusing than encouraging. To receive a certificate signed by Federal and State officials, bearing the seal of a United States bureau, is an accomplishment not to be despised. Federal sanction is powerful. The franking privilege is valuable because it helps directly to sell ideas as well as because it aids poverty-stricken educational institutions. As far as Indiana is concerned, the financial consideration is unimportant, unless the free mailing privilege should be extended to the package library and general information services. In the latter case the saving to the university would be considerable.

The home reading course plan has proved helpful to university extension divisions and to the State departments of public instruction. In Indiana I find considerable evidence that approval is given to the definite sign of cooperation between the State institution, the State board, and the Federal bureau. The State department of public instruction welcomes the opportunity to encourage reading in and out of the schools. The university extension division has for many years tried various devices to encourage systematic study and reading; it

has found the United States Bureau of Education home reading courses best suited to reach that wide and miscellaneous class which can not undertake the sustained study demanded by college correspondence courses.

We have a large number of inquiries about the home reading courses. Not only do they come from members of parent-teacher groups, which we try especially to reach, but also from teachers, librarians, and from men and women of the most varied occupations. Grade students and high-school students, too, get help from the courses. Often former college students write for enrollment blanks, and a few enroll. Some learn for the first time about the regular correspondence study courses and enroll in them.

Many persons whose attention is caught by the reading courses become interested in other methods of home education. The courses catch the fancy of people who otherwise would get little or no introduction to educational materials, never know of the Bureau of Education, nor know at all of the services of their State university. Enrolled readers represent most varied occupations: Housewives, railroad brakemen, telegraph operators, electricians, clerks, glass workers, office managers, farmers, art students, ministers, and school boys and girls. Those who recently obtained certificates were, respectively, housewives, school children, a minister, a high-school principal, a librarian, and a college student.

Probably the number of persons who enroll and complete courses will never be large compared to the number who write to the university for information or to the number who become interested in the idea of reading selected books consecutively. No figures are available to show how many teachers use the official reading lists as guides for their pupils, how many women's clubs use them for their programs, or how many librarians distribute the leaflets to their patrons to help them in the selection of books from the local library. There are several librarians in Indiana who make a practice of enrolling readers and supervising their reports.

The value of the courses is not alone to be measured by the number of persons who complete them nor by the character of the "work" the readers do, but chiefly, to my mind, by the power of suggestion—the impulse toward high-class literature which is given to the scores of youths and adults who ask for the printed lists and give some interest and attention to them. A surprisingly large number actually enroll, purchase some of the standard books, and read them. I have little patience with that academic insistence which demands lesson papers and elaborate tests as essential evidence of educational values. I think even a display advertisement is not to be despised as a possible educational device. What book reviews may do for the sophis-

